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AID COUNCIL CALLS FOR SUSPENSION OF ALL MILITARY AID AND SALES TO INDONESIA

The Australian Council for Overseas Aid has called for the suspension of all Australian military aid and sales to Indonesia in the wake of the massacre in Dili, East Timor.

'We are appalled by what has happened in Dili and urge the Government to suspend all military aid and sales until such time as talks involving all parties to the conflict in East Timor are convened', said ACFOA Executive Director, Russell Rollason.

'Under its own guidelines the Government has agreed that "Australia will not export military or related goods to governments that seriously violate their citizens' rights". These events in Dili are a gross violation of the rights of the Timorese people and Australia must be consistent and suspend all military aid and sales to Indonesia', said Mr Rollason.

Australian military exports to Indonesia totalled $886,339 in 1989/90 and $474,352 in 1991. The Defence Co-operation Program is expected to total $2.312m this year.

ACFOA has written to the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, urging the suspension and requesting him to:

a) follow up Australia's protest to the Indonesian Government with a request that a United Nations team visit the area within the next 24 hours. This may help ensure the safety of people in Dili;

b) urge the United Nations Secretary General to mobilise such a UN monitoring team and have them standing by within the next 24 hours;

c) call on Indonesia to join in international talks with all interested parties to settle the question of peace in East Timor.

'Any international inquiry into this massacre must ask the obvious question as to why does Indonesia think it necessary to deploy so many combat troops in East Timor', commented Mr Rollason.

'As a nation, we must do all we can to stop the killing and brutality on our door step,' he said.

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